

Amen!

Rev 22:12-21

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It's the secret code word that we all use to let everyone know that the prayer is over and you may open your eyes and unclasp your hands and get on with whatever is next.

Pass the potatoes.

Or like the child who was standing with us in the pre-service prayer that the officebearers have together - the officiating elder said "Amen" and the child began "Lord, bless this food and drink for....." and then gulped, realizing what had happened.

"Amen" - we've used it already in this service, and will use it more.

As has become our custom, we take a Sunday evening service at the beginning of the church year to focus our intercessory prayers on the life and ministry of Calvin CRC in the months ahead.

We'll be doing that together very shortly.

But before we start, let's fast forward to the end for a brief minute.

To the very end.

To "amen."

And what does that little word tell us?

We pray.

All of us here do that.

For ourselves, our families, each other, this church, our schools, the government.

We pray.

We seek God's careful attention.

We pray sometimes for radical intervention.

We pray.

Question - do we truly expect that these prayers are heard?

That they are more than merely verbalized wishful thinking on our part?

That they go.... well..... somewhere to the spiritual reality called heaven and the throne of God and that.... well... somehow answers come back?

Do we truly expect that?

I imagine that we do.

We expect that even when some of the things that we pray about and intercede for don't turn around or shift in the way we hope and long for.

Myah Meester remains in the hospital.

A couple that I had prayed would remain together has separated.

A project I hoped would come together has kind of fallen apart.

How about you?

A habit you've been working to shake, and praying for the grace to do so, praying for 5 years -- that habit still is as shamefully there as ever.

The child that has wandered from the faith, and whose name you've carried to God's throne for over a decade, still shows no sign of spiritual openness.

Yet we continue, don't we?

We continue to pray even when circumstantial evidence might suggest that the prayers **are** just verbalized wishful thinking,

or that God is so busy dealing with the heartaches of others that he has no resources left for us

or that we dialed the wrong number, so to speak.

Yet, we continue.

We continue because we share,

way down deep we share a firm resolve that was expressed over 400 years ago by two young believers, and written in the Heidelberg catechism.

We have it today as Q/A 129.

Let's say it together:

129 Q. *What does that little word "Amen" express?*

**A. "Amen" means,
This is sure to be!
It is even more sure
that God listens to my prayer,
than that I really desire
what I pray for.**

Do you believe that?

One has to wonder if the authors really believed it.

After all, as Mary Horst points out in her sermon on this Lord's Day, they didn't live in the most pleasant of times.

It was the middle of Reformation wars. Much blood was being spilt as Catholics and protestants fighting each other, and among themselves.

One of the Catechism authors had lost several friends in a boating accident, and had spent time in jail. The other one grew up very poor and struggled with illness much of his life. [Hulst, *Amen*, CTS Forum, Spring 2009]

So - it wasn't that these two men were ignorant of what was going on around them.

Rather, they were able to look deeper than the immediate circumstances.

They reached into the scripture and found reassurance there.

If you were to pull out a Psalter Hymnal and check p.925 you'd find the following scripture references footnoting this q/a.

Isa. 65:24;

Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear.

2 Cor. 1:20;

For in [Jesus] every one of God's promises is a "Yes." For this reason it is through him that we say the "Amen," to the glory of God.

2 Tim. 2:13

if we are faithless, he remains faithful-- for he cannot deny himself

We serve a God who, no matter what the external appearances, listens, watches, understands, and **does** respond.

He does NOT leave this world careening on some fluky path to who knows where.

Chance does not rule the day.

Fate does not control the final outcome.

We may not see the extent of God's working.

And we may not be able to comprehend the path it takes.

But work he does.

And every promise he has made **will** be fulfilled.

Jesus is the guarantee of that.

So says 2 Cor 1 - is our living "Amen"!

The one whom God promised would come

a promise first made in the tangle of a ruined Paradise

reaffirmed to Abraham

spoken again to David

and foretold by the prophets

that one has come.

And - he himself said - he is coming again!

He is working history towards that day.

From first to last he keeps the authority.

Blessed are all whose lives remain in His hand!

Jesus - the eternally faithful one.

If you wonder whether that will actually be so, think of how people must have felt in the centuries before Jesus was born.

The prophets spoke, and spoke again.

But - so it seemed - nothing.

Nothing seemed to be happening.

And there is the inter-testamentary period.

Four hundred years between the last prophet and the nativity.

That's about the same gap of time as between the writing of the Catechism and today!

No word from heaven. Seemingly no action.

But from our perspective we know that God **was** at work.

Always.

In perfect timing and perfect ways.
Surely it came to be!

And,
so surely,
will his second coming arrive.

And
equally so surely
the power of God is at work in our lives and church and nation between now
and then.

Amen!
Yes, surely it will so be.

Romans 8 tells us that even as we, along with all creation, groan in bondage awaiting that
final day of release from sin's curse,
even so, says verse 34, Christ is at the right hand of God interceding for us
saying "Amen!" on our behalf.

How can we say Amen?
With the same bible-based assurance that allows us to recite the catechism's first question
and answer.

Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

**A. That I am not my own, but belong--
body and soul,
in life and in death--
to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.**

**He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,
and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.**

**He also watches over me in such a way
that not a hair can fall from my head
without the will of my Father in heaven:
in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.**

**Because I belong to him,
Christ, by his Holy Spirit,
assures me of eternal life
and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready
from now on to live for him.**

Amen looks to all that God has done through history.
And trusts that the God of Adam & Eve, of Abraham, of David, of Isaiah,
the God of the Bethlehem shepherds, of Paul and Timothy and Barnabas and Peter

and James and Zacharinus and Ursinus and John Calvin and Martin Luther and Johanna Veenstra and Mother Theresa and Desmond Tutu

is,

through Jesus
our God.

And, as surely as he has been at work in their lives
so surely will he work in our lives.
and in our world.

And

so surely
will he send his son again.

And let all God's people say.....

"Amen!"